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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR G U/S DOBRIANSKI

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SUBJECT: THAI RESPONSE TO IPAPI DEMARCHE

REF: STATE 163036

1. Regional Environmental, Science, and Health Officer (REO) delivered points in Reftel to Dr. Itti Ditbanjong, Ambassador attached to the Office of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and to Ms. Sansanee Sahussarungsi, Director of the Division of Economic Information of the Department of International Economic Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. REO also passed the statement of core principles on to the Thailand Ministry of Public Health in order to facilitate possible discussion of the issue between the two ministries. On September 9, Ms. Sansanee called with several questions regarding the formation of the International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza (IPAPI).

2. Ms. Sansanee asked the deadline for Thailand's response. She also asked if commitment to participate would comprise a commitment to fund activities of the partnership. She asked what other countries have committed to participate. And she asked why this is being directed toward the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (as opposed to the Ministry of Health).

3. In response to Ms. Sansanee's questions, REO said that the U.S. would like to announce the formation of IPAPI during the opening sessions of UNGA on September 14. The U.S. is not looking for financial commitments at this time, but rather an acceptance of the "core principles" and a commitment to participate. Meetings will be held on the margins of UNGA and will be followed by other Senior Officials Meetings to establish committees and develop action plans. The U.S. would like to see broad global participation in IPAPI. Canada, Japan, the U.K., and Australia have already committed to participation. The U.S. especially would like to see early participation by countries directly affected by avian influenza, including Thailand, Indonesia, China, Kazakhstan and others, and we would particularly hope for Thailand's assistance in persuading other ASEAN countries to join. While we recognize that Thailand's Ministry of Public Health and Ministry of Agriculture have already been collaborating closely with U.S. agencies in Thailand (CDC and the Foreign Agriculture Service), this initiative aims to engage the foreign ministries of various countries in the problems associated with avian influenza because international cooperation in matters of diplomacy and political issues, in confronting a potential avian flu pandemic, is as important as international cooperation in the more obvious human and animal health issues.

4. Ms. Sansanee replied that she thought the initiative to cooperate in this way would be a worthwhile endeavor. She was uncertain, however, whether Thailand would be able to make a formal commitment to participate in IPAPI by a September 14 deadline.

5. Note: The Economic Counselor at the Embassy of Japan in Bangkok spoke with Ms. Sansanee about IPAPI on September 7. He told REO that Ms. Sansanee at that time said that the Ministry of Public Health would be taking the lead on any avian flu related issues. In her conversation with REO, Ms. Sansanee appeared to be convinced of the value of MFA involvement. Mission will report as we hear of any further developments in the Thai response.

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